

A golfer is captured in the middle of a golf swing on a lush green course. The golfer is wearing a white cap, a colorful patterned polo shirt, and light-colored trousers. The background features rolling green hills and a line of trees under a cloudy sky. A grey banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

A Beginner's Golf Guide



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOLF

The two guiding principles behind the rules of golf are to play the ball as it lies and to play the course as you find it. In its simplest form, golf is about playing the ball from teeing area to the hole by hitting it with a golf club, and not otherwise touching the ball.

A fundamental challenge of the sport is to deal with whatever position your ball comes to rest in – whether good or bad. While there are some necessary exceptions (such as obstructions and other abnormal course conditions), the essential nature of golf means these must remain exceptions rather than the norm.



HOLES

Each hole begins in the teeing area, and ends when the player hits the ball into the hole (or in another way as allowed by the rules). Holes are varied in distance and typically are either a par 3, 4, or 5.



TEEING AREA

Each hole begins on the “tee” which is designated with two markers, and the golfer must tee off in between them and no more than two club lengths behind them.



THE GOLF BALL

There are many different brands, colors, and constructions of golf balls that are allowed to be played under the rules of golf. The USGA stipulates the golf ball must be no more than 1.620 oz. and have a diameter of no less than 1.680”.



CLUBS

There are many different types of clubs. Many players start the hole by using a driver, and on or near the putting green, players often choose to use their putter. In between, there are a variety of woods, irons, and wedges, all designed to move the ball different distances.



UNIT OF MEASURE

Golf courses in North America and many other parts of the world are measured in yards. Many courses abroad are measured in meters.



GOLF EQUIPMENT



PUTTER

This is the “flatstick” club that you use on and around the putting green. They come in a variety of different styles from mallets to weighted to blades. The most important thing is finding one with the proper length that lets you naturally hang your arms for a smooth stroke.



DRIVER

The club designed to be hit off a tee and go the farthest. While an adult-sized driver might have 8-11 degrees of loft, beginners with slower swing speeds traditionally perform better with higher degrees of loft.



FAIRWAY WOODS

Sometimes called a fairway metal, hybrid, or rescue club, this helps you hit the ball far off the fairway. It has a higher loft than a driver and is designed to hit the ball off the ground.



IRONS

A club with a flat-faced, solid metal head. A full iron set is typically a 4-PW (8 clubs). Golfers can customize how many irons vs. fairway metals they would like to keep in their bag.



PITCHING WEDGE (PW)

This is a great utility club to have for pitching and chip shots around the green.



WEDGES

As you master the pitching wedge you will want to get a Sand Wedge, which has more bounce and provides more loft. Then once you master that, consider an even loftier Lob Wedge (60 degrees).



DRESSED TO PLAY

You don't have to be dressed head to toe in the latest golf-specific clothing and shoes to play the game.

At minimum, all you need are athletic shoes, comfortable shorts, pants, or a skirt and a shirt (some clubs may require a collared shirt and sleeves for men).

As you begin to play more and improve, you will likely want to build up your golf-specific clothing. Here is how to start.



GOLF SHIRT

Males should wear a collared polo while females have more style options in regards to tops, including sleeveless options.



GOLF PANTS, SHORTS OR SKIRTS

Comfortable slacks or pants or golf skirts over jeans are preferred.



GOLF SHOES

At first, athletic sneakers may be okay, but as you progress, golf shoes with soft spikes provide more performance.



SOCKS

Athletic socks with cushion for walking.



GOLF GLOVE

A glove provides a tackier grip on the club and can also protect your hand from blisters.



GOLF HAT

It's usually sunny when you play golf. A hat can protect your face from the sun and also keep sweat off your eyes.



BASIC GOLF EQUIPMENT

You don't have to be dressed head to toe in the latest golf-specific clothing and shoes to play the game. At minimum, all you need are athletic shoes, comfortable shorts, pants, or a skirt and a shirt (some clubs may require a collared shirt and sleeves for men). As you begin to play more and improve, you will likely want to build up your golf-specific clothing. Here is how to start.



GOLF BAG

A bag that accommodates your clubs, balls, tee, and any other accessories. They usually have two shoulder straps for comfortable walking.



WATER BOTTLE

Bring enough hydration on the course with you to last your whole round, or confirm water is available on the course.



GOLF PUSH CART

Golfers may carry their bag or use a push cart, which has three wheels and keeps the weight of equipment off a player's back. Most golf courses have push carts for rent or bring your own.



RANGE FINDER

Once your golf game improves to the point where you have consistency in how far you hit your respective clubs, a distance measuring device will come in handy to tell you how far away you are. Many courses also mark sprinkler heads on the course with yardage to the center of the green or install 100, 150 and 200-yard plates in the fairway. Smartphone golf apps also offer GPS capability.



GOLF COURSE SAFETY

Many families play golf because it's one of the safest sports for all ages. But the threat of moving balls and clubs along in an outdoor environment means you should always be aware of these potential hazards.

WEATHER

If you hear thunder or see lightning, you must get off the golf course as quickly as possible. If the clubhouse is too far away and storms are imminent, seek shelter on the course such as a comfort station.

WAYWARD GOLF BALLS

A golf ball can travel 150-200 mph! Yell "Fore!" if you or someone in your group hits a ball that appears to be flying toward other people. Don't be shy! You cannot yell this loud enough! Your whole group can yell it!

Always be watching the other shots in your group as they hit and if you hear "Fore!" from another hole, a ball may be sailing your direction. Duck and cover quickly!

HYDRATION AND FOOD

A round of golf can take place under the hot sun, last 4-5 hours, and you could walk 5-6 miles. It is important to plan accordingly by keeping water bottles and any healthy snacks to keep you going.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR LOCATION

Sometimes golfers hit errant shots onto other holes. It's important to make sure no one is hitting before you go over to retrieve or play your ball.

DO NOT STAND BEHIND OTHER GOLFERS

When in close proximity of other golfers, such as on a driving range or tee box, never stand behind another golfer with a club in their hand. They may take a practice swing and have no idea you're there and the heavy clubface could strike you at a dangerous speed. Standing ahead of a golfer, even if off to the side, could still make you prone to being hit by a "shank" shot.



GOLF ETIQUETTE 101

Over the last few centuries, golf has cultivated its very own culture, language and mannerisms. It's true, golfers can sound and act pretty crazy!

The phrase "Golf etiquette" means having proper manners with your playing partners during a round and treating the course properly during your round.

Here are a few basic etiquette items to be aware of that will make you look like a seasoned pro on the golf course.

BEFORE AND AFTER THE ROUND

Arrive at the first tee 5-10 minutes before your tee time. Introduce yourself and learn everyone's name. Upon finishing the round, it is customary to thank your playing partners with a handshake.

DURING THE ROUND

It is important to stand still and not make any noise as another player in your group is preparing to take a shot. Mobile phones should be kept on silent and used at a minimum during a round of golf, though there are some golf apps that have scoring and GPS that may come in handy.

Standing in the line of sight of another golfer on the putting green is distracting, both in front of them and behind them. Stand off to the side instead. Be mindful of your shadow as well. Maintaining a steady pace of play is important regardless of your ability.

Always try to be at your ball and ready to hit when it's your turn. If you are having a rough hole and it is not a competition, it is okay to pick up your ball and move on to the next tee to not hold up the group.

If your playing partners hit a ball into the rough or trees, it is customary to help them look for the ball for the allotted three minutes.

AFTER THE ROUND

A round of golf typically ends with thanking players for playing. In a competitive event, players will sign and attest each other's scorecards and turn them in to the tournament committee.



GOLF TERMS EXPLAINED

ALBATROSS

A score of three under par, also known as a double eagle. This is the hardest score in golf, much rarer than a hole-in-one.

EAGLE

A score two less than par.

BIRDIE

A score one less than par.

PAR

The score an expert golfer would be expected to make on a given hole under ordinary conditions.

BOGEY

A score one more than par.

CADDIE

Someone who helps a player by carrying clubs and giving advice.

ALIGNMENT

The position of a player's stance and body relative to the ball and target.

AWAY

After the tee shot, the order of play is determined by the player farthest from the hole, who is "away."

BALL MARKER

A small, flat object, usually circular, that can be used on the putting green to mark your ball so you can pick it up to clean it or move it out of the way of another player.

BUNKER

A specially prepared area of sand on the course.

DIVOT

A piece of turf that is cut out of the ground after swinging. Should always be replaced by the golfer.



GOLF TERMS EXPLAINED

FLAGSTICK

A movable pole placed in the hole to show players where the hole is. Players may take it out before their shots if they would like.

GROUND UNDER REPAIR

A marked section of the course where the ground is unfit for play. Players may take free relief from this area.

LOFT

The angle between a club's shaft and clubface. Higher loft causes the ball to go higher and generally shorter.

LOOSE IMPEDIMENT

Any unattached natural objects like stones, sticks, and leaves. Golfers may move these without penalty so long as the ball does not move.

OUT OF BOUNDS

All areas outside the boundary edge of the course. All areas inside that edge are in bounds.

PENALTY AREA

A designated area you can move from with a one-stroke penalty if your ball comes to rest there.

PUTTING GREEN

The area on the hole the player is playing that is specially prepared for putting.

TEE

An object used to raise a ball above the ground to play it from the teeing area. It must be no longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm).

TEEING AREA

The area the player must play from in starting the hole, defined by two tee markers.



NOTABLE GOLF ORGANIZATIONS TO KNOW

United States Golf Association

The USGA is the governing body of the sport of golf in the U.S. and promotes a fair and equitable sport for all by administering a global set of playing, equipment, handicapping and amateur status rules.

<https://www.usga.org/>

Youth on Course

A national organization that partners with 1,400 partner golf courses to provide \$5 tee times to youth players, plus provide more opportunities ranging from career prep to leadership and scholarship programs.

<https://youthoncourse.org/>

The First Tee

An international youth development organization that introduces the game of golf and its values to kids and teens through after-school and in-school programs.

<https://firsttee.org/>

Drive, Chip and Putt

A joint initiative of the Masters Tournament, USGA and PGA of America, Drive, Chip and Putt is a free nationwide junior golf development competition aimed at growing the game by focusing on the three fundamental skills of golf.

<https://www.drivechipandputt.com/>



NOTABLE GOLF ORGANIZATIONS TO KNOW

PGA Junior League

The flagship youth program of the PGA of America's foundation PGA REACH, the league exists to bring communities together through fun, team golf experiences.

<https://www.pgajrleague.com/>

US Kids Golf

An Organization dedicated to making equipment ideal for children and supports coaching, tournaments and golf setups for courses that accommodate children.

<https://www.uskidsgolf.com/>

American Junior Golf Association

An organization dedicated to the overall growth and development of young men and women who aspire to earn college golf scholarships through competitive junior golf. The AJGA hosts nationwide tournaments and keeps a junior golf ranking.

<https://www.ajga.org/>

International Golf Federation

IGF was founded in 1958 and is the recognized International Federation with the Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

<https://www.igfgolf.org/>